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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 005142

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/09/2009

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ENRG](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQI KURDISH LEADERS CHECK IN WITH TURKS,
TALABANI OFFERS ALTERNATIVE ROUTE FOR TURKISH TRUCKERS

Classified By: Acting PolMilCouns Margaret H. Nardi for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

1. (C) Summary: PUK leader Jalal Talabani and KDP official Nechirvan Barzani each met separately Sept. 9 with FonMin Abdullah Gul and other MFA officials during brief visits to Ankara. MFA told us that both were pessimistic that national elections can be held in Iraq by next January given the security situation there, and Barzani predicted that the census planned for October would be pushed to November. Talabani offered security for Turkish truckers if they stay in Kurdish-controlled areas, offered to meet the leader of ITF, and told the Turks that the IIG would sign off on an oil drilling deal with Turkey soon. End summary.

2. (C) Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) leader Jalal Talabani made a brief visit to Ankara Sept. 7 on his way to a European tour. Coincidentally, Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) official Nechirvan Barzani also stopped here on the same day on his way home from Europe. Both met separately with FonMin Gul and other MFA officials. MFA Chief of Section for the Middle East Hasan Sekizkok gave polmiloff a readout on Sept. 10. Sekizkok reported that both Talabani and Barzani believe that the security situation in Iraq would not stabilize in time for January elections, and they predicted the elections would be pushed back.

3. (C) KDP's Barzani added that he believes that the census planned for October will be pushed back until November. (Note: The census is particularly sensitive for the Turks, who accuse Iraqi Kurds of seeking to change the balance of population in Kirkuk so that they can control this key city. End note.) Gul told both Talabani and Barzani that Turkey was not seeking a "Kirkuk problem," and urged Iraq's Kurds and Turkmen to work together. For his part, Talabani told Gul that he would meet the leader of the Iraqi Turkmen Front. (Note: We believe he has said this before, but to our knowledge such a meeting has not taken place. End note.)

4. (C) Talabani told Gul that the PUK was prepared to provide security for Turkish truckers from the border all the way to Baghdad, provided the drivers followed the road through Sulemaniye and Kirkuk instead of through Mosul. Sekizkok said that Gul appreciated the offer, but it was not clear if Turkish drivers would want to take this route (which would take drivers well north and east of the most direct route into the Iraqi heartland). Sekizkok added that this would be a commercial decision for Turkish drivers and trucking companies.

5. (C) Sekizkok told us that Talabani and Gul also discussed the oil field near Tak-Tak. Talabani reported that the Turkish oil company, TPAO, is near to reaching an agreement with the Iraqis on drilling rights, and that soon the IIG Minister for Oil would sign off on the deal. We understand this deal had been held up due to uncertainty over whether a Kurdish regional official or IIG official would sign the deal. (Comment: We think it is good news that both sides here took the high road and recognized IIG sovereignty over this oil. End comment.)

6. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
EDELMAN